

Homily for the 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time [C] (July 13-2025)

Readings:-Dt 30:10-14; Col 1:15-20; Lk 10:25-37

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ;

The central theme of today's Scripture readings is that we gain eternal life by loving God, in Himself and living in our neighbours, by becoming good neighbours.

"I'll be happy to honk your horn for you!" Have you heard the story about the elderly woman from in a small town in East Texas who had car trouble on the way to the supermarket one morning? Her car stalled at a stop sign. She tried everything to get her car started again, but no luck. Suddenly, a man in a pick-up truck came up behind her and, with obvious agitation, he started honking his horn at her impatiently. She doubled her efforts to get her car going. She pumped the gas, turned the ignition, but still no luck. The man in the pick-up truck continued to honk his horn constantly and loudly. I love what the elderly woman did. Very calmly she got out of her car, walked back to the pick-up and motioned for the man to lower his window and then politely she said: *"I'll make a deal with you. If you will start my car for me, I'll be happy to honk your horn for you!"* — Now, that is what you call "Rising to the occasion!" And that is *precisely* what Jesus does here in Luke 10. The lawyer was "testing" Jesus, "Honking his horn loudly," so to speak! He was trying to trap Jesus and trip Him up with a loaded question, but Jesus (as He so often did), rose to the occasion and passed the test with flying colours. In so doing, He reminded the people back then (and us today), of what the main thing is in the Christian Faith.

A summary of the lessons from the readings of the Day:- The first reading, taken from Deuteronomy, reminds us that God not only gives us His Commandments in Holy Scriptures, but that He has also written them in our hearts so that we may obey them and inherit eternal life with God. The refrain for today's Responsorial Psalm (Ps 69) condenses the lessons of the three readings in a single memorable statement, *"Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live."* In the second reading, St. Paul reminds the Colossians, and us, that just as Christ Jesus is the *"visible image of the invisible God,"* so our neighbours are the visible image of Christ living in

our midst. In today's Gospel, a scribe asks Jesus a very basic religious question: *"What should I do to inherit eternal life?"* In answer to the question, Jesus directs the scribe's attention to the Sacred Scriptures. The Scriptural answer is, *"love God, and express that love by loving your neighbour."* However, to the scribe the word "neighbour" means another scribe or Pharisee – never a Samaritan or a Gentile. Hence, the scribe insists on clarification of the word "neighbour." So, Jesus tells him the parable of the Good Samaritan. The parable clearly indicates that a "neighbour" is anyone who needs help. Thus, the correct approach is not to ask, *"Who is my neighbour?"* but rather to ask, *"Am I a good neighbour to others?"* Jesus, the Heavenly Good Samaritan, gives us a final commandment during the Last Supper, *"Love one another as I have loved you,"* because the invisible God dwells in every human being.

Points for personal life and Reflection:- 1) **Let us remember** that the road from Jerusalem to Jericho passes right through our home, parish, school, and workplace. We may find our spouse, children or parents *"lying wounded"* by bitter words or scathing criticism (ours?) or by other more blatant forms of verbal, emotional or physical abuse. Hence, Jesus invites us to show our love to others, in our own home, in school, in the workplace, and in the neighbourhood, as the Good Samaritan did. 2) **Let us check** to see if we are good neighbours. We become good neighbours when we are people of generosity, kindness, and mercy toward all who are suffering. Our sincere smile, a cheery greeting, an encouraging word of appreciation, a heartfelt *"thank you"* can all work wonders for a suffering soul. 3) **Let us allow** the *"Good Samaritans"* to touch our lives. Let us be willing to touch, or be touched by, persons we have once despised. For some of us, it may be persons of another colour or race; for others, it may mean persons of a different political persuasion. Let us pray that the Spirit of the Living God may melt us, mould us, and use us, so that there will no longer be even one person who is untouchable or outside the boundaries of our compassion. 4) **Let us accept** God's invitation to be loving and merciful to our enemies. These enemies include both the people we hate, and those who hate us, for our God, is extending to people of all times His invitation to love and serve Him in loving and serving everyone, including those from whom we are estranged.

Gospel exegesis: In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus presents three philosophies of life concerning our relationship with our neighbour:

1) The philosophy of the thieves who robbed the Jewish traveler

– Lust: *“What is yours is mine; I will take it by force.”* This has been the philosophy of Marxism, of other revolutionary movements, and of modern terrorist groups. In accepting this philosophy of life, the thieves, like their modern counterparts, terrorized others and exploited them, ignoring human rights and having selfish gain as their chief motive. In Jesus’ day, the steep, winding, country road from Jerusalem to Jericho was the safe haven for such bandit groups. No wonder, the Jewish traveller was robbed, stripped, beaten and left for dead on the Jericho Road! Some Bible scholars estimate there were at least 12,000 “thieves” in that Judean wilderness surrounding Jerusalem. These thugs roamed the countryside like packs of wild dogs, attacking innocent victims. In our world, many more thieves operate than we might realize. These are the privileged few, the “robber barons” of the modern world. They are the “Enron” executives of every company who just can’t be satisfied with being wealthy; they have to have all the marbles. The robber who takes money that does not belong to him is a thief. The rapist who takes sexual pleasure from someone not his spouse is a thief. The adulterer who steals another person’s spouse is a thief. Corporate executives and CEOs who bilk innocent stockholders of billions of dollars are thieves. God has given us things to use, and God has given us people to love. But when we begin to love things and use people, we become thieves. If our attitude is: *“I just make sure I get mine. I don’t care about anyone else,”* we are probably thieves.

2) The philosophy of life of the Jewish priest and the Levite –

Legalism: *“What is mine is mine; I won’t part with it.”* The priests were powerful upper-class authorities governing the Temple cult. The Levites were the priests’ associates, who provided music, incense, sacred bread, Temple curtains and adornments. Their duties also included “kosher meatpacking” and banking. In the parable, the representatives of these classes did not pay any attention to the wounded man because of their utter selfishness. Misplaced zeal for their religious duty gave them a couple of lame excuses: a) *“If the man is dead and we touch him we will be unclean for seven days (Nm 19:11), and disqualified from Temple service.”* Thus, they saw the wounded man on the road, not as a person needing help, but a possible source of ritual impurity. b) *“This may be a trap set for us, by hiding bandits.”* [This excuse has some validity, as bandits sometimes did use a “wounded” member to decoy a prospective victim into stopping, thus setting himself up for robbery.] The parable’s priest and Levite, however, represent people who are always demanding their rights, but never talking about their responsibilities. These two men

exercised their legal right to pass this man by, and forgot God in the process. These people don't say, "*I do what I want to do,*" but, "*I will only do what I have to do. I won't stick my neck out for anybody.*" When one does only do what one must do in life, one is not a good neighbour.

3) The philosophy of the Samaritan — Love: "*What is mine is yours as well. I shall share it with you.*" The Samaritan was generous enough to see the wounded Jew as a neighbour. He ignored the long history of enmity between his people and the Jews. [The Samaritans were a bastard race by Judean standards. They presumably originated from the Israelites who remained behind in their homeland when the Assyrians, following their conquest in 722 BC, deported the leading families of the region. In the years that followed, the Israelites who remained intermarried with the foreign settlers brought in by the Assyrians. The new hybrid ethnic generation — "Jewish Assyrians"—continued to regard the Torah as their law but erected their own temple on Mount Gerizim, just outside Shechem (modern Nablus), at a time when there was no Temple in Jerusalem. John Hyracanus, a Maccabean Jewish ruler, destroyed this Shechem temple during his reign (134-104 BC), and thus created lasting enmity between the Judeans and the Samaritans. No wonder, every morning in his daily prayer a Pharisee would go to the Temple and, out loud, thank God he had not been born a woman, a Gentile, or a Samaritan! Yet, Jesus makes the Samaritan the hero of the story.] The Good Samaritan was taking a real risk, since the robbers who had assaulted the traveller might still be nearby. Nevertheless, he gave first aid to the wounded Jew, took him to a nearby inn and made arrangements for his food and accommodation by giving the innkeeper two *denarii*. Two *denarii* was a lot of money—enough, in fact, to pay for more than three weeks' board and lodging. The Samaritan also assured the innkeeper of further payment for any additional medical requirements of the wounded man. What made this Samaritan so special was not the colour of his skin, but the compassion in the Samaritan's heart. No law could make the priest or the Levite stop, but love could make the Samaritan stop. — Who would we have been that day — the thief, the priest, the Levite, or the Good Samaritan? If a person has a need that we can and should meet, that person is our neighbour. Every time we see a person in need, we immediately become a neighbour; we become a minister with a ministry. Columnist Ann Landers once wrote, "*Be kind to people. The world needs kindness so much. You never know what sort of battles other people are fighting. Often just a soft word or a warm compliment can be immensely supportive. You can do a great deal of good by just being considerate, by extending a little friendship, going out of your*"

way to do just one nice thing, or saying one good word.” What God wants more than anything is for us to show our love to others, in our own home and school, in the workplace, and in the neighbourhood, as the Good Samaritan did. Jesus is inviting us to have hearts of mercy for those who are being left hurt or mistreated on any of the “Jericho Roads” of life.

JOKES OF THE WEEK:- **“Good Samaritan” to neighbour’s cat:** Little Tim was in the garden filling a hole when his neighbour peered over the fence. Interested in what the youngster was doing, he politely asked, *“What are you up to there, Tim?”* *“My goldfish died,”* replied Tim tearfully, without looking up, *“and I’ve just buried him.”* The neighbour said, *“That’s an awfully big hole for a goldfish, isn’t it Tim?”* Tim patted down the last heap of earth, and then replied, *“That’s because he’s still inside your stupid cat.”*

Additional Anecdotes:- **1- Einstein’s little neighbour:** When Einstein fled Nazi Germany, he came to America and bought a two-storied house within walking distance of Princeton University. There he entertained some of the most distinguished people of his day and discussed with them far-ranging issues from physics to human rights. But Einstein had another frequent visitor. She was not, in the world’s eyes, an important person like his other guests. Emmy, a ten-year old neighbouring girl had heard that a very kind man who knew all about mathematics had moved into her neighbourhood. Since she was having trouble with her fourth-grade mathematics, she decided to visit the man down the block and see if he would help with her problems. Einstein was very willing and explained everything to her so that she could understand it. He also told her she was welcome to come anytime she needed help. A few weeks later, one of the neighbours told Emmy’s mother that Emmy was seen entering the house of the world-famous physicist. Horrified, she told her daughter that Einstein was a very important man, whose time was very valuable, and shouldn’t be bothered with the problems of a little schoolgirl. She then rushed over to Einstein’s house, and when Einstein answered the door, she started trying to blurt out an apology for her daughter’s intrusion — for being such a bother. But Einstein cut her off. He said, *“She has not been bothering me! When a child finds such joy in learning, then it is my joy to help her learn! Please don’t stop Emmy from coming to me with her school problems. She is welcome in this house anytime.”* –And that’s how it is with God! He is our neighbor, and He wants us to come to His house anytime! (Fr. John Pichappilly in ***The Table of the Word***; quoted by Fr. Botelho)